

WHY GIRLS GO WRONG.

(A Letter of the Editor of the New York Times.)

May I take the liberty of endorsing your editorial article on the present investigation of the origins of vice via women's wages? You have said something that was worth saying and that needed saying. The subject happens to be one on which I have a little practical knowledge, as certain work which I was doing for the government during two years, 1907-'09, brought me into direct personal touch with numerous women of the underworld, and I saw their life, not in the spotlight of investigation, but in its day-to-day reality. I then came to the conclusion that there are—speaking generally—only three possible reasons for women taking up vice as a profession: First, seduction, usually at a very early age, after which the girl feels, or is made to feel by persons for whom she holds commercial possibilities, that there is no return for her, and she might as well go "the limit" and get out of it whatever she can; second, natural inclination, and, last, economic pressure.

As to the women who drift into an evil life through inclination, I can only say that their number is larger than is popularly supposed. One does not have to go to the Tenderloin to find the "natural prostitute." Leaving these out of the question, there remain the first and third classes who may justly enough be considered victims of environment. The first accounts for a very large—probably the largest—percentage of the whole. That is, it, with the congestion of our tenements, the street playground, the dance hall, all prepare the way and give opportunity to the seducer. But these wider issues, involving social and educational questions as well as economic, and affecting not only girls but society at large, are not the concern of the committee now taking testimony.

The third class, the girls who deliberately enter what they themselves significantly term "the life," without seduction and without a love for it, simply because they cannot make a living at an honest trade, I believe to be practically nil. In my own experience I met only one woman who made this claim for herself. She was a professional of twenty years' standing, who said that her husband deserted herself and her child at 18, leaving her penniless with a baby. She worked for \$4 a week in a cheap restaurant, but finding herself unable to support herself and her child upon this, she went to a disorderly house and offered herself as an inmate. I believe her story, for she was a woman of unusual natural force of character, but the instance is a rare one. I may be accused of crawling the lines of definition too closely in this matter. The fact is, we need a little exact definition. The statement has been broadly made that low wages is the principal cause of prostitution, when it actually belongs rather far down among those causes which contribute to easy seduction or which help women naturally inclined in that way to convince themselves and the sentimentalists who sympathize with them that they are not so much to blame for their manner of life after all. To put the responsibility for a whole social condition, or even for any considerable part of it, upon the question of shopgirls' wages is like trying to stand a pyramid on its apex, instead of its base.

Another example of the loose sort of generalizing so common—and so harmful—along this line is illustrated by the recent statement of a prominent society agitator that the halls, etc., where girls on strike congregate are haunted—"swarming"—was the

word if my memory serves me—with procurers waiting for victims. If I know anything of the sort of girl involved in the recent strikes, a procurer who haunted their hall would last about one minute and three seconds; at the end of that time he would be distributed in very small souvenirs. I do not wish to record myself as unsympathetic with agitation for better wage conditions for women. I am not even alarmed at the prospect that no small number may be compelled to higher efficiency or thrown out of employment altogether. Every advance in civilization hurts somebody. What I do wish to do is add my protest to that of your editorial article against the view that a few dollars a week more or less is the price of the average woman's virtue. For that is what it comes to, stripped of verbiage. I am not, personally, a suffragist, but as I read their arguments on this question in the public prints, it seems to me that I have a higher respect for my sex than have many of the advanced ladies who hold themselves so superior and their sisters so servile. Raise wages, it means, wherever they are imposed, I say, but put the necessity for it on a proper sociological basis. You would even say if they were told that a low wage-scale was "forcing" a large group of their fellow men to become panderers?

149. CH. M. BULLIS.

A breath of Hell is in every La Tasador smoke. Learn to ask for it. (Adv.)

PUT PEOPLE ON THE LAND!

Valuable Gun.

As a kind of consolation for the fact that "nobody loves a fat man," an admirer of Maclyn Arbuckle has presented him with the original gun used by Jim Reed, famous in exclusive bandit circles back in the '70s. "It was bought by Reed in Fort Smith, Ark., in 1874, just before a huge hold-up near Hot Springs," Arbuckle explains, with glowing pride. "He was finally located near San Antonio, Texas, but made his escape, and was on his way back to the Indian territory when he stopped at the home of a brother-in-law named Orr in Collin county, Texas, where Belle Starr, the beautiful young woman bandit, joined him.

"The Texas Rangers trailed him from San Antonio to Orr's house, and for the reward offered for Reed's capture, dead or alive, Orr gave him up. The rangers killed him twenty miles west of Paris, Texas, on the border of the Indian territory. Belle Starr, who was with him, took the gun and went on and joined the outlaws, of which she was queen, on the Canadian river, in the territory.

"Belle wore the gun for years, and on the occasion of her second marriage in 1892, when all the bandits assembled at her cabin to dance, she presented the gun to Bill Dalton and told him to wear it and be as game as Reed had done.

"It is said the gun never left him until it was taken from his dead body by Deputy Marshal Louis Hart, after Dalton had been killed in 1898, at Mud Springs, near Ardmore, Indian Territory."

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BEWARE OF EVERYTHING!

Beware of little women—little girls, of course, I mean—

From the giddy age of fifty to the modest seventeen;

Beware of merry widows, of affluents and cats,

Of silken hose and wobble skirts and ostrich feather hats.

Beware of pencilled eyebrows and of rouge upon the cheek,

Of powder which is plastered on to cover up the antique.

Beware of girls who tell their mothers things which are not true;

For if you court and marry them they'll do the same to you.

Beware of men in velvet hats, of men in checkered suits,

Of hair that's bronzed a golden red, but darker near the roots.

Beware of men in fancy beards, of men who chew cigars,

Of men who don't give up their seats to ladies on the cars.

Beware of youths who carry fobs and wear white gloves at night,

Of cuffs that are detachable, of hands that squeeze too tight.

Beware of men with diamond rings, beware of men with canes,

Of those who grab you in the street and talk about their pains.

Beware of gentle mothers if their children make a noise;

Remember that your miseries are other people's joys!

Beware of making peace between a husband and a wife;

If you try it you will only make two enemies for life!

Beware of every woman who is driving a machine—

If she kills you she will drive away and never care a bean!

Beware of fat policemen when they're swearing at the heat,

Of putting silly questions to patrolmen on the beat.

Beware of your wife's mother—you will say that's stale advice,

But all the same it's pretty good, and bears repeating twice.

Beware of men of real estate, who have a lot to sell,

Of telling buxom ladies that "they're looking fat and well."

Beware of bargain counters and all other kinds of strife,

Of giving little dinners to some other fellow's wife.

Beware of everything you do, of everything you think,

Of every mouthful that you eat, and every drop you drink.



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